



# Graduation Matters Summer Summit

## Presenter Biographies

### **Ann Gilkey**

Chief Legal Counsel, The Office of Public Instruction  
*Breakfast Roundtables Bully Prevention/Intervention*

Ann Gilkey was appointed as Chief Legal Counsel for OPI by Superintendent Juneau in January, 2009. She graduated from University of Montana School of Law in 1987 with an additional degree in school psychology. Formerly Chief Legal Counsel and supervising attorney for Montana Department of Family Services (now DPHHS) in child and adult protection; continues to be active as Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) volunteer; and Plans to read six books this summer.

### **Bob Wise**

President, Alliance for Excellent Education  
*Keynote and Business Roundtable*

Bob Wise is president of the Alliance for Excellent Education and former governor of West Virginia. He currently co-chairs the Digital Learning Council with Jeb Bush, former governor of Florida. Governor Wise also chairs the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. As governor of West Virginia from 2001 to 2005, he implemented the PROMISE Scholarship program, significantly increasing college attendance. From 1983 to 2001, Governor Wise served in the U.S. House of Representatives, during which time he aggressively worked to preserve financial aid for students to attend college. He is author of the book *Raising the Grade: How High School Reform Can Save Our Youth and Our Nation*. In 2011, Governor Wise was named to The Nonprofit Times "Power & Influence Top 50," an annual listing of the fifty most influential executives in the nonprofit sector.

### **Coralie Tesch**

GEARUP Liaison, Hardin High School, Home of the Bulldogs!  
*Overview 101-102 Hardin*

Coralie Tesch is beginning her 2nd year as the HHS GEARUP Liaison. Her role as a member of the Graduation Matters Hardin Team is data research and computer tech expertise.

### **Deborah Halliday**

Community Learning Partnerships Policy Advisor, The Office of Public Instruction  
*Workshop Breakout: Community Collaboration, Overview 101-102, Like Community Strategy Session*

Deb Halliday currently serves as Community Learning Partnerships Policy Advisor to State Superintendent Denise Juneau at the Montana Office of Public Instruction. Her work includes launching Graduation Matters Montana, which seeks increase the number of Montana students who graduate from high school ready for their next steps in life; and Montana Schools of Promise, which seeks to dramatically improve the state's most struggling schools. Ms. Halliday is a graduate of Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs' Master's program in Public Administration, where she focused on Social Welfare Policy, and has over 20 years' experience working with local, state and national organizations on policy initiatives.

### **Deborah Neuman**

Executive Director, Thrive  
*Workshop Breakout: Mentoring and Tutoring*

Deborah Neuman has been the executive director of Thrive, a local non-profit for the past twenty five years. She has 35 years' experience in administration of both for profit and non-profit businesses. Deborah has extensive background in community, organizational and program development. She developed the model Child Advancement (CAP) and the Parent Liaison programs that provide support to school aged children and their families to ensure

the success of every child. Deborah has provided training and technical assistance to school districts, businesses, communities, churches and local and state agencies and is known for her accomplishments in building unique and effective collaborations with school districts, health departments and others. Recently Deborah was invited to present the Thrive model of 'Building Community Support for Families at the National Alliance of Children's Trust Funds conference. She is a Golden Key Club Honor Society member. Deborah has been a University of Montana Faculty Affiliate and served as the Region VIII representative to the National Network of Runaway and Youth Services Committee along with numerous regional, state and local leadership committees.

### **Denise M. Juneau**

Montana State Superintendent of Public Instruction

As Montana's State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Denise Juneau is committed to creating a public education system that prepares every child for lifelong learning, work, and citizenship.

Denise grew up in Browning, Montana on the Blackfeet Reservation. She earned her undergraduate degree in English at Montana State University, a Master's Degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education, and a law degree from the University of Montana. In 2010, Carroll College awarded her with an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters.

Denise taught high school English in New Town, North Dakota and Browning. She was a Montana Supreme Court judicial clerk and worked briefly for a national law firm before serving as the Director of Indian Education at the Office of Public Instruction.

In 2008, Juneau was the first American Indian woman elected to serve in a statewide elected position. She is a strong advocate for all Montana students and promotes policies that ensure students meet today's challenges and tomorrow's opportunities.

### **Eric Meredith**

Data Analyst, The Office of Public Instruction

*Intensive: Using Data to Inform your Strategies*

This is Eric Meredith's 2nd year as a Data Analyst at OPI with his time split between the Indian Education Division and the Measurement and Accountability Division. He is a born and raised Montanan that has a masters degree in Ecological and Environmental Statistics and a bachelors in Secondary Education. He has 3 years of experience teaching at the high school level which includes coaching several sports, with one year at a private school for troubled teens and 2 years at public high schools. He also have 3.5 years of teaching at the college level.

### **Gary Owen**

President, United Way of Cascade County

*Breakfast Roundtables*

Gary Owen has been the President of United Way of Cascade County since December, 2000. He previously worked as Development Director for Special Olympics Montana and Regional Director for the American Heart Association. He has more than 20 years' experience in the non-profit field. Gary is a current member of United Way Worldwide's U.S. Membership Accountability Committee and previous member of the National Professional Council. He served two terms as Board Chair and founding board member of the Montana Nonprofit Association. He currently serves on the Montana State Employee Charitable Giving Campaign Advisory Council, previously served on the Governor's Advisory Council for the Montana 2-1-1 Coalition. Gary is a Leadership Great Falls Class of 2002 graduate and President of the Great Falls Soccer Foundation and previous Operating Committee Chair for the Siebel Soccer Park. He is a past Member of the Board of Directors for the Alliance For Youth and previously served as Chair for the Cascade County Healthy Youth Coalition. Gary has a bachelor degree in business administration from East Carolina University.

### **Jael Prezeau**

Curriculum Director, The Office of Public Instruction

*Intensive: Creating School-Family-Community Partnerships*

For the past 11 years, Jael Prezeau has been an administrator for Libby K-12 Schools. Her responsibilities included curriculum, assessment, federal and state grants and special education. She is a member of the regional and national Parent Teacher Home Visiting Project Teams, and has been a Solid Foundation advocate since Libby Schools began working with PIRC and WORD to provide more meaningful parental involvement. Jael was recently appointed Administrator of the Content Standards and Instruction Division of the Office of Public Instruction.

**Jim Lambert**

Program Manager, Jobs for Montana's Graduates Program  
*Breakfast Roundtables*

Mr. Lambert has 25 years of experience in education; working first as a program assistant for a Bilingual program, implementing the Metis language into a small school in western North Dakota. He spent 8 years integrating the School-to-Work model, servicing students in northeastern Montana. He taught the Jobs for Montana's Graduates program (JMG) for one year prior to moving to Helena in 2003. Jim was appointed program manager for JMG in 2005 and has worked in that capacity since. As well as providing technical assistance to JMG specialists and schools, some of his main duties with the program are: New Site Development, Career Development Conference, High School Specialists training, and Grant Distribution. He is also responsible for developing the biannual JMG Newsletter, editing the state JMG Website, and creating other publications as needed. Jim has facilitated workshops and training at the national level; having recently conducted an accreditation site review for the state of South Carolina. He currently supervises 18 career specialists and schools in the western part of Montana.

**Jodi Morgan**

High School Counselor, Thompson Falls  
*Workshop Breakout: College and Career Readiness*

Jodi Morgan is entering her fifth year as the school counselor at Thompson Falls High School and her second year as a Montana School Counselor Association Executive Board Member. Born and raised in the Bitterroot Valley, she feels blessed to serve Montana students. As a first generation college student, she attended Dawson Community College where she earned an Associate of Arts degree in Education. She finished her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at The University of Montana and graduated from MSU-Billings with a Master's of Education – K-12 School Counseling. Jodi worked at Denton Public Schools, a small, rural school in Central Montana, for nine years as an elementary teacher and K-12 school counselor. In addition, she served as a basketball coach, track & field coach, athletic director and National Honor Society Adviser. Jodi's areas of interest are on career & college counseling as well as academic advising. She has written numerous grants that have benefited the students in Thompson Falls. Jodi has a strong desire to help students believe in themselves. Motivating students to graduate from high school and go on to college is what makes her career fulfilling.

**John Farley**

Elementary Principal, Shepherd School District  
*Workshop Breakout: College and Career readiness.*

John Farley currently works as the elementary school principal at Shepherd Elementary School. He has been in education for a little over 15 years, having taught grades Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, PE, served as assistant principal at a junior high and high school, and assisted staff in creating the first College Bound/TurnAround elementary school in the state of WA in 2009 and MT in 2012. He is extremely excited about our college bound students and our progress can be followed on Twitter @shepherd\_k6 and Facebook (Shepherd Elementary School). Some of our college bound pics can also be seen on the following site:  
<http://www.shepherd.k12.mt.us/domain/17>

**Karen Allen**

Executive Regional Director, Missoula County public Schools  
*Overview 101-102 Missoula*

Karen Allen serves as Executive Regional Director in Missoula County Public Schools where she supports schools at all levels K-12, special education, professional development, and Indian Education. Special areas of interest include professional learning communities, 21st century education, and design thinking as a strategy for solving problems. Through her career Mrs. Allen has been a speech/language pathologist, special educator, early childhood educator, and principal at the elementary and middle school levels. She co-chairs the Graduation Matters Missoula parent/family committee.

**Katie Boedecker**

Owner and Manager, PRO Outfitters

*Business Roundtable*

Katie Boedecker, a native Montanan, grew up in Highwood. She went to Montana State University and graduated with a degree in Business Management. She was raised in a family business, Showdown Ski Area, where she was the Marketing Director and Operations Manager. She and her husband Brandon have now owned PRO Outfitters for ten years. PRO is one of the oldest outfitters in Montana and runs fly-fishing trips on the Smith River; a lodge on the North Fork of the Blackfoot; and an upland bird hunting lodge east of Great Falls. PRO is a seasonal business, and at the peak of their season employs 20-30 independent contractors as guides; and 15 high school aged students as seasonal employees. These employees are a balance of people from Helena, Ovando, Helmville and Drummond. PRO has established a fund to help employees with any post-secondary education called the PRO Outfitters Education Scholarship Fund. Through their fundraising efforts through clients and an annual fundraising event they give away \$3,000 - \$6,000 a year to PRO employees. Katie is the mother of four children and an active parent at Helena High School and Helena Middle School.

**Krissy Ferriter**

Campus Corps Program Manager, Montana Campus Compact

*Breakfast Roundtables*

Kristine M. Ferriter is the Campus Corps Program Manager for the Montana Campus Compact. The mission of Montana Campus Corps is to actively engage college students in meeting community-identified needs through meaningful service. The program is sponsored by the Montana Campus Compact, a network of 20 college and university campuses located throughout Montana and committed to renewing the public purposes of higher education. Krissy joined MTCC in December 2011, shortly after completing a M.S. in Environmental and Forest Resources at the University of Washington. She has completed two full-time AmeriCorps terms of service in addition to several years of experience in managing domestic and international volunteer programs.

**Kristen Lundgren**

Director of Community Impact, United Way of Yellowstone County

*Workshop Breakout: Community Collaboration*

Kristin Lundgren, M.Ed., is the Director of Community Impact for United Way of Yellowstone County, and an invested member of Billings Graduation Matters. At United Way Kristin works to identify needs and implement solutions in the areas of Education, Health, and Financial Stability. One of the main tools she uses is cross-sector partnerships/collaborations. Kristin is continually building partnerships, sustaining partnerships, and sometimes dissolving partnerships. She is the mother of two teenagers and some days would like to dissolve that partnership, but most days sees the value in staying with it! Kristin has cross-cultural experience, from the business board room to the village clinic in West Africa, to the halls of higher education, to suicide prevention work with Indian tribes in Montana. She has extensive training in youth development, prevention, evaluation, and in coalition-building and collaboration, but the most valuable education she brings to this presentation is the "school of hard knocks:" years of attempts, failures, and successes in building cross-sector partnerships that actually accomplished something besides meeting!

**Laura Sundheim**

High School Counselor, Hardin High School, Home of the Bulldogs!

*Overview 101-102 Hardin*

Laura Sundheim has served as Junior/Senior Counselor at HHS for the past 30 years, and is always looking for innovative ways to motivate student achievement and support transitions to college. In order to make this possible, being creative, entertaining and employing incentive programs will lure students into making timely progress! As kids change, so must we! It keeps us in the Game!

**Liz Tuss**

Literacy Coach/Technology, Anaconda High School

*Workshop Breakout: College and Career Readiness, Breakfast Roundtable: Career Readiness*

Liz Tuss has been an educator for 14 years, nine at the elementary level in Salmon, ID and Philipsburg, MT and five teaching Business and Technology at Anaconda High School. She just took a new position as the Literacy

Coach for AHS and am currently working with the Striving Readers Grant. She has an Elementary Education Degree, Business Education Degree, and a Masters in Educational Technology.

### **Madalyn Quinlan**

Chief of Staff, The Office of Public Instruction

*Intensive: Using Data to Inform your Strategies*

Quinlan has worked for the Office of Public Instruction for 21 years. Her duties focus on coordinating OPI's legislative agenda, supervising OPI's communication functions, providing Cabinet level support for the agency's K-12 education information systems and providing leadership support to the Superintendent of Public Instruction.

### **Mary Howard**

Financial Literacy Program Manager and General Manager, Campus Outreach

*Breakfast Roundtables*

Mary Howard serves as the Financial Literacy Program Manager and General Manager of Campus Outreach for Western Montana. She has worked for non-profit Student Assistance Foundation for over nine years. Prior to working at Student Assistance Foundation, Mary worked for over fourteen years in financial aid offices at community colleges, two-year technical colleges, and four-year public institutions. In addition to her other duties, Mary serves as Outreach Manager on the Salish Kootenai College campus in Pablo and loves helping students prepare for college, manage their money and resolve issues that lead to success in their pursuit of their post-secondary dreams! Mary is a Montana native, born and raised in Missoula, and attended both the University of Montana and Montana State University (Go Griz and Cats? Sorry, it's GRIZ!) She and her family love western Montana life and enjoy camping, swimming, hiking and walking with their dogs.

### **Michael J. Corso, Ph.D.**

Chief Academic Officer, Quaglia Institute for Student Aspirations

*Intensive: Using Data to Inform your Strategies*

Dr. Corso has a doctorate in Education from Boston College. He has been an educator for over twenty-five years and has taught at every grade level kindergarten through graduate school. He is deeply committed to the belief that students are the agents of their own learning. This passion makes him a natural fit for work in the area of student aspirations. Dr. Corso has worked throughout his career to improve teaching and learning through teacher training and education. His doctoral work grounds his work as a researcher field specialist in a contemporary philosophy of education and human knowing. In his role at QISA, Dr. Corso combines research on student perceptions of their schools with educational theory and the living, breathing practice of students, teachers and administrators.

### **Mike Miller**

Insurance Agent, State Farm

*Business Roundtable*

Mike is in his 5th year as a State Farm agent in Helena, MT and has been with State Farm since 2004. He has extensive experience in the insurance and financial services arena which allows him to help his clients manage the risk of everyday life. He is a 3 time Ambassador Travel Life Insurance qualifier and a member of the Pacific Northwest Zone Agent Advisory Council. He is originally from Anaconda, MT and a 2004 Graduate of Carroll College, where he majored in Finance & Management. He played Safety for the Saints and was a member of 2 National Championship Football teams. In his free time he enjoys golf, traveling, and watching college football.

### **Mitch Evans**

English Teacher / English Department Chair, Hardin High School

*Breakfast Roundtables Peer-to-peer mentoring*

Mitch is a graduate of Regis University and has been involved in education for over 18 years. He is currently an English Teacher at Hardin High School and is also the Student Council Adviser. He is a member of the MASC State Board and a National Presenter for SDE (Staff Development for Educators). He is the faculty adviser for the "Peer to Peer" mentoring program at HHS.

**Robin Kelley**

CAP Coordinator, Thrive

*Workshop Breakout: Mentoring and Tutoring*

Robin Kelley graduated from Montana State University in 1997 with a BA in English and History Education. Since then, she has worked in varied school settings spanning all grades K-12. In 2002, Robin joined Thrive as a Volunteer Coordinator for the Child Advancement Project (CAP). She initially supervised the CAP program at the high school for four years before switching gears and now coordinates the program at two elementary schools.

**Scott Levandowski**

Market President, First Interstate Bank

*Business Roundtable*

Scott Levandowski grew up in Great Falls, Montana and attended school there until graduation from Great Falls High School in 1990. He graduated from Montana State University in 1995 with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Marketing. Mr. Levandowski joined First Interstate Bank in June 1997 and has held several management positions with the company. Currently, he is president of the Gallatin Market which includes branches in Bozeman and Belgrade. Scott graduated with a Masters in Banking degree from Pacific Coast Banking School at the University of Washington in August of 2003. He is active in many community organizations.

**Sheila Callahan**

President and General Manager, Mountain Broadcasting Radio

*Business Roundtable*

Sheila is the President and General Manager of Mountain Broadcasting which owns stations in Missoula, Hamilton and Bozeman. Her career has included on air, news and national sales and marketing. Sheila has worked on many non-profit boards and committees in Missoula including the Graduation Matters Missoula committee, the 21st Century Schools committee and the Budget and Levy committee. She is a founding member of the Friends of Public Education in Missoula and has worked on passage of many school bonds and levies. She is a member of the Missoula Radio Broadcasters Association, the Montana Broadcasters Association and the national Radio Association of Broadcasters. Sheila was raised in Missoula, MT and was educated at Carroll College in Helena and the University of Montana. She and her husband, Max Murphy have two children, Jesse and Mary-Margaret and one grandchild, Benjamin.

**Sindy Filler**

Americorps\*Vista and Parent, Libby Public Schools

*Intensive: Creating School-Family-Community Partnerships*

Sindy started to participate in different parental involvement groups as the mother of a 4th grade student in 2009. She has enjoyed volunteering in the individual schools committees as well as the district's Parent Advisory Council, and proudly representing the parent voice as a member of the state wide MBI council. Trained in the Solid Foundation model for parental engagement and trainer for the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, she took it one step further becoming a full time Americorps\*VISTA volunteer for a year in 2011. She has immersed herself in working with school administrators, the Libby Public Schools Board of Trustees and students' families; to implement new ways to facilitate communication, improve current systems and develop strategies to continue the efforts of successful parental engagement in the Libby Public Schools. Sindy is now embracing the opportunity to become part of Graduation Matters Libby! and expand her contribution to areas of dropout prevention and academic success in the community.

**Steve York**

Assistant Superintendent, The Office of Public Instruction

*Breakfast Roundtable My Voice Survey*

Montana high school and college graduate with 14 years of teaching experience, 19 years of administrative experience and now has been with the Office of Public Instruction for 2.5 years as Assistant Superintendent.

## **Susan Court**

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Coordinator, The Office of Public Instruction

*Breakfast Roundtable*

Susan Court has been the HIV/AIDS/Teen Pregnancy Prevention Specialist and the YRBS Coordinator at the Office of Public Instruction for the past 15 years. Prior to this position, she taught elementary physical education for 18 years. A graduate of Carroll College and native of Hinsdale, Montana, Susan enjoys playing piano and organ as a church accompanist, and golfing.

## **Susan Hay Patrick**

CEO, United Way of Missoula County

*Breakfast Roundtable*

Susan Hay Patrick has been a nonprofit leader for more than 30 years. Before joining United Way of Missoula County in 2006 as chief executive officer, she operated her own independent consulting business, specializing in nonprofit organizations and small businesses. Prior to that, she served as executive director of MAZON: A Jewish Response to Hunger, a national foundation based in Los Angeles that supports hunger prevention and relief efforts in the United States and abroad. She also served as deputy director of America's Second Harvest in Chicago (now called Feeding America), the headquarters of the national food bank network and nation's third-largest largest charity; and as the director of development and communications for the Food Research and Action Center in Washington, DC, a national nonprofit organization working to improve public policy in the area of domestic hunger. Susan began her career as a reporter for a daily newspaper in Connecticut and as a freelance corporate communications writer for a Fortune 500 corporation.

## **Tara Ferriter-Smith**

Instructional Specialist, The Office of Public Instruction

*Breakfast Roundtable*

Tara Ferriter-Smith is an Instructional Specialist for the Montana Office of Public Instruction. She collaborates with educators across the state in implementing effective research-based instructional strategies for increasing student achievement. Tara received her BA in Elementary Education from Carroll College in Helena, Montana and is finishing up her masters in Educational Leadership. She was a classroom teacher for ten years and has works extensively assisting schools set up effective systems for supporting student learning through Response to Intervention practices.

## **Thea Whalen**

Office Manager, The Office of Public Instruction

*Intensive: Creating School-Family-Community Partnerships*

Thea Whalen currently works as Office Manager for Superintendent Denise Juneau and also works with Deb Halliday on Graduation Matters Montana. Thea comes to OPI by way of the Montana Parent Information and Resource Center which spearheaded many best practice models on building positive relationships between schools, parents and community. The Montana PIRC was the lead on bringing the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project, Solid Foundation and How Family Friendly is Your School walkthroughs.

## **TJ Eyer**

Division Administrator, Career, Technical and Adult Education, The Office of Public Instruction

*Breakfast Roundtable*

T. J. Eyer works at the Office of Public Instruction as the Secondary Director for Carl D. Perkins Programs for Montana. He began his education in his home town of Glendive, followed in 1987 by earning a Bachelor of Arts Degree in History with a minor in Political Science from Montana State University - Bozeman. Upon Graduation T. J. served four years in the United State Marine Corps. T. J. was fortunate to return to Glendive to begin his educational career in 1992 teaching Middle School Social Studies as well as coaching. While Teaching T. J. Earned his Master of Education in Secondary Administration from Montana State University – Bozeman. In 1996 T. J. and family moved to Boulder, MT where for the next nine years T. J. held the position of Jefferson High School Principal. During this time T. J. was recognized as Montana Secondary School Principal Association, Principal of the Year for Montana in 2005. In 2007 T. J. joined the Office of Public Instruction as the Division Administrator for

the Career, Technical, and Adult Education Division. T. J. along with his wife Sarah are the proud Parent of three sons, Mick, Sam, and Rahkei.

## **Ty Show**

Student Advisory Board Member

*Student Voice*

Ty Show is a former member of Superintendent Denise Juneau's first inaugural Student Advisory Board. He is a graduate of Browning High School and will be entering his second year of college in the Fall. He spent his first year studying Industrial Engineering at MSU- Bozeman where he was named Freshman of the Year. He also acted as the Co-Vice President of the American Indian Council representing the Blackfeet tribe.

## **Wes Feist**

High School to College Pathways Program Manager Office of the Commissioner of higher Education, Montana University System

*Workshop Breakout: College and Career readiness OCHE*

Wes Feist attended Johnson & Wales University and earned a Bachelor of Science in Management through the university's College of Business. After graduation, Wes worked for two years at an international wealth management firm; ensuring federal, state, and organizational compliance of 250 associates out of the Denver Branch. When an opportunity arose to work in education at his alma mater, it was a natural fit. For five years, Wes worked to provide opportunities for students involved in Career and Technical Student Organizations (CTSOs) to enroll in higher education, further their CTSO involvement at the post-secondary level, and guide them through leadership development and training. Wes also worked with the Colorado Community College System and a number of high schools throughout the nation to articulate credit that allows students to make a more seamless transition from secondary education to college and university options. Wes completed a Master of Arts in Higher Education from the Morgridge College of Education at the University of Denver in 2010. Wes grew up in Montana and is thrilled to return to the Big Sky Country to help improve educational opportunities of the students throughout the state.